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## All Souls' Church for the Deaf

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A HOUSE OF PRAYER FOR ALL THE DEAF

Philadelphia

(16th Street above Allegheny Avenue)

Our Fifty-ninth Year

1888 - 1947



# All Souls' Church for the Deaf

PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL

3220 NORTH 16th STREET

PHILADELPHIA



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Rev. Henry J. Pulver, Missionary

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3226 N. 16th Street, Philadelphia

Lay Reader: Melvin Ruthven

## MISSION COUNCIL

Elmer E. Scott, Clerk      Reed R. Robertson, Treasurer  
Maynard Robbins, Warden      Joseph Pierce  
Gordon Brigham

**Bequests should be made "to the Church  
Foundation of the Diocese of Pennsylvania,  
in trust for All Souls' Church for the Deaf."**

## Foreword

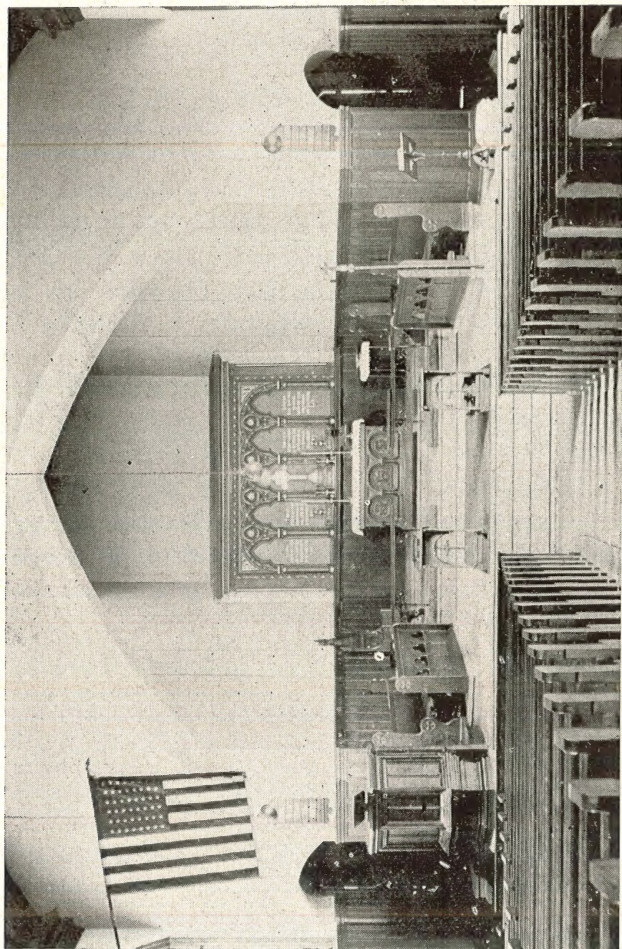


This year, All Souls' celebrates two anniversaries, the thirty-fifth of the new church and the sixtieth of the old. But our Mission is really far older; Christ was first preached to the Deaf in Philadelphia 100 years ago, in 1847. Our first Church was consecrated on December 8, 1888. The present All Souls' was consecrated on December 20, 1913. Appropriately, both anniversaries are celebrated this December.

It is remarkable. Not our beginning, but our lasting. Without money or friends in high places; with nothing earthly; but with faith in that Charmed Name, the people of All Souls' have kept their Church as a witness for Christ among the Deaf these sixty years.

We regret that the space of this little booklet does not permit us to tell of our sons who have carried the Living Light to their fellows of silence all over America. Nor have we space to set down the deeds of our devoted laity, who like Margaret Syle, James S. Reider and William H. Lipsett, have given of their love and service for the up-building of our Church. They shared. And He who is able to do exceedingly abundantly more than we ask or think, knoweth the measure of their service. May we also serve!





All Souls' Church for the Deaf

## *All Souls' Church for the Deaf*

THIS is the story of a Church for the Deaf. It is very simple. It is not cast in heroic mold. It has not the glamor of romance. It does not carry the thrill of great deeds for the Faith in far lands. It is merely the plain record of how the Deaf folk in a city have followed the leading of the Holy Spirit.

### CHRIST FOR THE DEAF

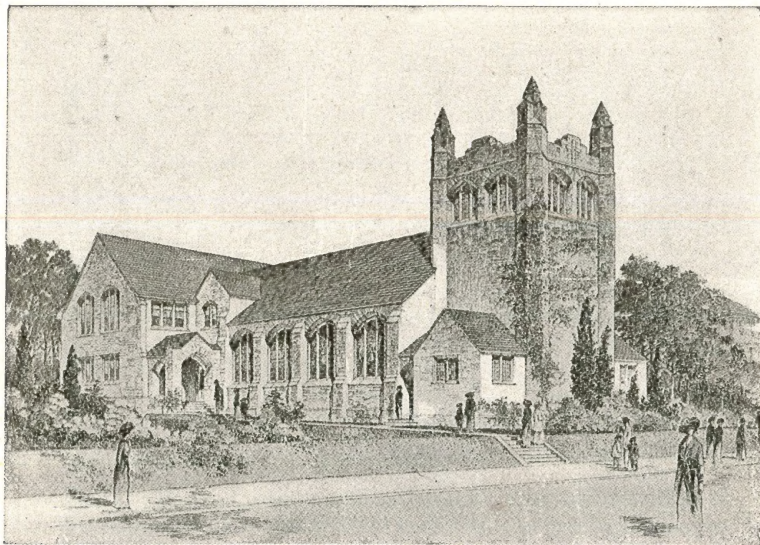
On the day of his departure the Master had said, "GO!" Not to the privileged of earth only. Not to far Cathay or the uttermost bounds of the west only. But also to the underprivileged; also to the Deaf. But almost nineteen centuries had to pass before the Church discovered that the Deaf also were to have the gospel preached to them.

The story of All Souls' Church is indissolubly linked with the history of our church's mission to the Deaf in the United States. It began with the interest of the first Bishop of Pennsylvania, the Rt. Rev. Wm. White, in the opening years of the last century. He was aroused it is said by the plight of two deaf orphans who were being exploited by a professional beggar on the streets of Philadelphia. This interest resulted in the establishment of the first school for the Deaf in Pennsylvania, and ultimately, in All Souls' Church for the Deaf.

No one knows for a certainty when or by whom the first services for the Deaf were held. There is a tradition that the Venerable Bede worked among them in the eighth century, and we know that the Abbe de L'Epee taught them in France as early as 1730.

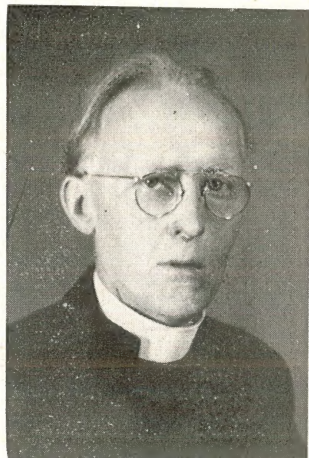
Services were held for the Deaf in Philadelphia as early as 1846 by the Rev. Francis J. Clere, son of the first deaf teacher of the Deaf, the Sainted Laurent Clere, who came from France to help Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet establish the first schools for the Deaf in the U. S. The younger Clere was rector of prominent Episcopal parishes in this and neighboring Dioceses.





All Souls - from old engraving

The Rev. Henry J. Pulver  
Vicar Since 1932



### *All Souls' Church for the Deaf*

As an organized missionary endeavor the work was begun about 1853 by the Rev. Thomas Gallaudet, a presbyter of our Church who is held in grateful memory as "the apostle of the Deaf." He was the son of a deaf mother, a gifted and charming woman, whose other son founded a college for the Deaf in Washington. His father, Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet, established at Hartford, Conn., the first public school for the Deaf in America and is venerated as the father of the education of the Deaf on this continent. This worthy son established the Church Mission for the Deaf in New York, and gradually extended his ministrations to cover most of the then existing dioceses in the United States. Today, ninety-five years later, there are over 200 missions to the Deaf in charge of our fifteen missionaries, most of whom are themselves deaf. This effort has resulted in the establishment of special churches for the Deaf, such as All Souls', Philadelphia, and at St. Ann's, New York. It has resulted also in the establishment of the Conference of Church Workers among the Deaf in the U. S. A., which aims to coordinate the work of the various missionaries and to support candidates for Holy Orders with a vocation for work among the Deaf. From it has grown numerous schools, Homes for the Aged, and state and national associations aiming at the welfare of the Deaf as churchmen and citizens. It has also encouraged other churches to establish mission work for the Deaf.

### ALL SOULS' BEGINS

On March 4th, 1859, Gallaudet gathered about fifty deaf people at St. Stephen's Church, Philadelphia. He used the beautiful Sign Language which has ever since been the main reliance of our Church for work among the Deaf. Until 1866 Gallaudet held services at intervals at St. Stephen's, Episcopal Academy, and Calvary Monumental



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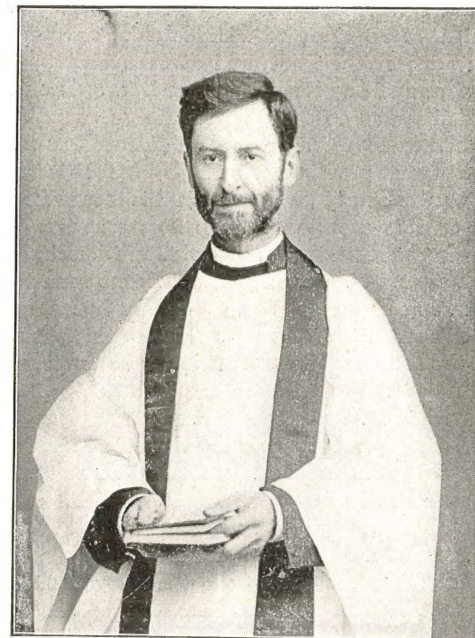
### *All Souls' Church for the Deaf*

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Church (now Calvary, W. Phila.). In 1865 the Rev. Francis J. Clerc, son of the first deaf teacher of the Deaf in America became Rector of Calvary. Clerc was a past master in the Sign Language and had been familiar with the Deaf from infancy. He immediately started regular Services for the Deaf as part of his parish work. This is well set forth in the following excerpt taken from a recent yearbook of Calvary Church: "In an endeavor to carry on the work and interests of Bishop White what is now All Souls' Church for Deaf Mutes had its beginning in Calvary Church. Bishop White had ever been the friend and patron of these people, and was the first president of the Pennsylvania Institute for Deaf Mutes. In 1865 a priest was associated with the parish to supervise deaf-mute work. Services were held for this congregation as often as they were, and in duplicate, for the normal congregation. In recognition of the activity of this mission, it was fully recognized as a part of the parichial organization, and represented on the vestry by a deaf-mute member." But in 1868 Dr. Clerc became Warden of Burd Orphan Asylum, and for convenience, moved the growing Mission to St. Stephen's. On March 2, 1872, in the presence of the Wardens, Vestry and congregations, Dr. Rudder, then Rector, formally accepted the Mission as a part of the Parish. But later in that year, Dr. Clerc was called to Burlington College (N. J.), and the Mission would have come to an untimely end had not Dr. Gallaudet kept it alive by supplying occasional services.

#### SYLE, FIRST DEAF PRIEST

At a time when a leader was most sorely needed the Rev. Henry Winter Syle, of blessed memory, came to hearten the struggling little Mission, and build it to a Church that should remain. Syle was a remarkable Deaf



The Rev. Henry Winter Syle, M. A.  
Founder and First Missionary  
1876 - 1890



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### *All Souls' Church for the Deaf*

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man, born of Missionary parents in China, and educated at Cambridge University, Trinity College (Hartford) and Yale. In 1874 he came to Philadelphia, as assayer and mathematician at the Mint, and at once took up work as Bible teacher and Lay Reader for the Deaf. The next year he was admitted as a Candidate for Holy Orders by Bishop Stevens, and in 1876, in the face of sincere but misguided opposition from prominent Bishops and Priests of the Church, was ordained Deacon. In his beautiful sermon preached on this occasion, Bishop Stevens said: "For the first time in the history of the Christian Church, authority will be given this day to a Deaf and Dumb man to preach the everlasting Gospel, to stand in God's house, and minister in God's name . . . Why do we ordain this person now? Does not the Bible forbid such a thing? I answer, no. There are certain defects or blemishes set down in the 21st Chapter of Leviticus . . . But among the twelve things named as disqualifications for the Priestly office, deafness and dumbness are not included. We find further in St. Luke . . . that Zacharias . . . a Priest who was dumb did continue to minister in his office in the Temple of God . . . Do not the ancient Canons forbid such an ordination? Again, I answer, No. The only one of the Canons of the early Councils which at all speaks of this class is the 78th of the Primitive Canons, commonly called the "Apostolical." This says "If one is totally deaf or blind let him not be made a Bishop; not that he is thus defiled, but that the affairs of the Church may not be hindered." As this is the only Canon . . . which at all bears upon the case, . . . there is no canonical bar to the candidate before us. . . . The people to whom this Deacon will officiate can, as a congregation, be ministered to only through the sign language. When, therefore, we find a man truly prepared, spiritually and intellectually, to minister to this peculiar people, in their own special mode

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### *All Souls' Church for the Deaf*

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of inter-communication, we feel that we are but following the leadings of God's Providence in setting him apart for that high and holy work." Thus, Mr. Syle, with the help of Bishop Stevens, opened the door of the Sacred Ministry to the Deaf. Ultimately, he was able to prove to the opposition that the step was wise. Since then, thirty-two Deaf men in our Church have followed the consecrated footsteps of Syle, and numerous other churches have admitted the Deaf to their ministry. After his ordination, Mr. Syle was appointed assistant at St. Stephen's, but continued at the Mint. In 1878, Bishop Stevens, to advance the work, brought it to the attention of the Convention, and in 1880, the Convention authorized the appointment by the Bishop of a Commission on Church Work among Deaf Mutes, under whose auspices, the work was to be extended, not only in this Diocese, but also into neighboring Dioceses, the Bishops thereof consenting. Mr. Syle was appointed Missionary of the Commission, and with splendid zeal, despite failing health, extended the work into Central Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, and Washington, D. C. In 1885 Mr. Syle moved the Mission from St. Stephen's in an effort to find a more convenient location for its work, and services were held in various Churches, latterly at the old Church of the Covenant on Filbert St. In 1887, this Church was sold, and the Deaf congregation returned to St. Stephen's.

#### **All Souls Consecrated**

Seeing that the Mission could never prosper in borrowed quarters, Mr. Syle now planned for a Church exclusively for the Deaf. The project seemed a fantasy, but through the splendid efforts of the deaf people of the city, all poor working folk, aided by a timely gift of \$5,000 under the Will of Catherine M. Bohlen, and a donation of \$1,000 from the



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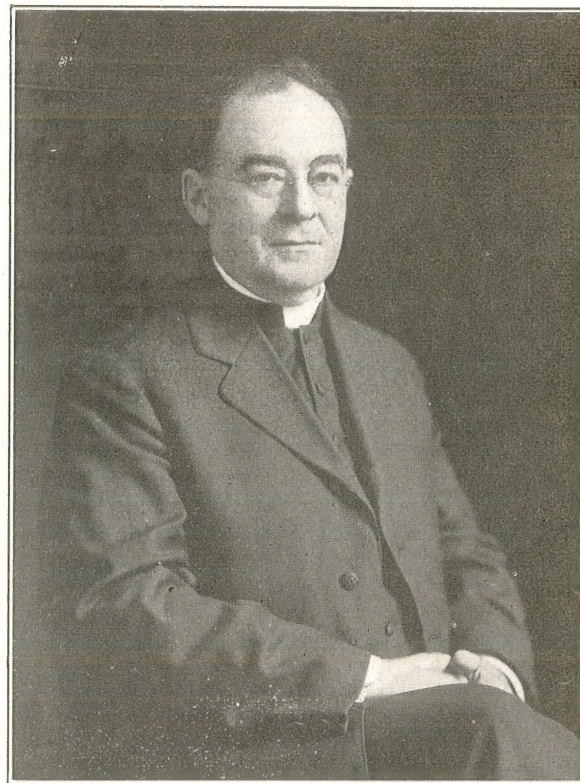
### *All Souls' Church for the Deaf*

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Society for the Advancement of Christianity in Pennsylvania, it was possible to purchase our first All Souls' Church located on Franklin St., above Green. This building was originally the First Cumberland Presbyterian Church and later the Jewish Synagogue of Beth El Emeth. The building is still standing. On Saturday morning, Dec. 8, 1888, the Church was formally set aside and consecrated for our use, by Bishop Whittaker, in the presence of eminent Clergy and Laymen, both hearing and deaf. There were now four Deaf Missionaries, the Rev. Messrs. Henry W. Syle, Austin W. Mann, Jacob M. Koehler and Job Turner; all were present and assisted in the consecration of this first Church in the world exclusively for the Deaf.

It was a joyful day for Syle and his people after a generation spent in wandering from church to church in search of a home. But Mr. Syle's strength had been expended in the long struggle to establish All Souls' as a House of Prayer for all the Deaf, and his health was already failing. It was a dauntless soul in a frail body and it could not go on. After two years more of work in organizing and upbuilding the Church, Mr. Syle passed from this life, dying untimely in his forty-fourth year. It was the day of the Epiphany, 1890. He had builded the house and lit the torch. It was for others to carry it on.

The Rev. Jacob M. Koehler, our second vicar, was a protege of Mr. Syle, who helped him pursue a course of study in the Philadelphia Divinity School. Previously, Mr. Koehler had spent three years at Gallaudet College. After his ordination in 1886, Mr. Koehler assisted Mr. Syle, chiefly in central Pennsylvania, where he established several new Missions. He also assisted Mr. Syle in editing "The Silent Missionary," a periodical they established to publicize the work. This paper is still in existence as The



The Rev. Charles Orvis Dantzer, M. A.  
Built the Present Church  
Vicar 1904 - 23



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## *All Souls' Church for the Deaf*

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Deaf Churchman. Upon Mr. Syle's death, Mr. Koehler became Vicar of our Church. He was possessed of a brilliant intellect, and was a great organizer, lecturer and writer. During his fourteen years with us, over 250 were Confirmed.

### THE NEW ALL SOULS

The Rev. C. Orvis Dantzer was our second great builder. Coming from Rochester to assume charge of the Church in 1904, he at once perceived that the Church building was inadequate, not being properly arranged for our work, and having structural defects that caused it to be constantly in disrepair. It was also too small for the enlarged congregation.

Aided by the devoted services of Mrs. Margaret Syle, widow of our founder, and for over 35 years our Parish Visitor, Mr. Dantzer set out to secure funds for rebuilding. It was found, however, that the old Church could not be suitably altered, and a new house of worship was decided upon. Through expenditure of much effort a building fund of \$10,000 was raised during the next few years. Then through the help of Bishop Garland, and a splendid donation of \$25,000 from Mr. T. Broome Belfield, a Vestryman of Old Christ Church, the vision of the years was quickly made a reality. The cornerstone of our beautiful Church on 16th St. was laid in 1912.

The edifice was expertly planned to meet our many needs, being a combined Parish House, of ample dimensions, built of stone, in the early Gothic type. The Church was made beautiful with stained glass windows given in memory of teachers and others interested in the Deaf, by its beautifully arranged Chancel, and its chaste decorations. It was especially adopted to the use of a Deaf Congregation, by the slope of the floor and the elevation of the

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## *All Souls' Church for the Deaf*

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Chancel, so that everything would be clearly visible to the Deaf worshippers. The Parish House was arranged in three floors, with a gymnasium, meeting rooms, and a large auditorium having a stage for the presentation of dramatic entertainments.

This edifice was completed after a year's work, and on December 20th, 1913, was formally consecrated by the Rt. Rev. Thomas J. Garland, then Bishop Suffragan of Pennsylvania, whose personal interest had done much to make the day possible. Attending the consecration were prominent Clergy and Laity of this and other Dioceses, and Deaf Missionaries representing nearly every Diocese in the Church. By this time, our Mission work had spread almost to the Pacific.

Then, came the "war that was to end all wars," but which we now see, sadly, did not. All Souls' served by organizing a Red Cross unit, by caring for French orphans and in other ways sharing the burden. The congregation grew apace, new activities were taken up, and responsibilities multiplied. In 1920, the Rectory was added to our church plant.

Before the war ended Mr. Dantzer's health declined, but he still gave the best of his heart and effort to the work. Finally, his strength gave out in 1923, compelling him to retire, and a few months after laying down the burden, he passed to the Church Triumphant. He had ably carried the vision of Syle to fulfillment, and left us a splendid Church complete in nearly all details as it is today.

### Down to Now

The Rev. Warren M. Smaltz, then a student at the Philadelphia Divinity School, succeeded Mr. Dantzer as Vicar in 1923, and continued in that office until he left in



## *All Souls' Church for the Deaf*

1932 to take charge of Missions in central and western Pennsylvania. During his vicarship important improvements were made in the Parish House and Rectory, in the direction of comfort and convenience. His able financial management maintained the Church in comfort, and he left our business management on a sound basis.

The Rev. Henry J. Pulver, present Vicar, assumed charge of the Church late in 1932, at the height of the Depression. His immediate task was to aid the needy, over half the congregation being unemployed. Employment and relief services were provided until government relief took over. The Church has gradually met the problems posed by the depression years and kept up its work amid the realities of a world at war. Now we are attempting chiefly to reach the young folk of this and neighboring dioceses. Work is carried on at the Pennsylvania and New Jersey Schools for the Deaf. Instruction for children is held at both schools, and at St. Paul's Church, Chestnut Hill. Regular missions are maintained at the Cathedral in Trenton and St. Andrew's, Wilmington.

We at All Souls' wish to go forward in the better world that is coming. Despite our handicap, our music is not set to dolorous measure. We look toward tomorrow. We thank God for His fostering care in the years that are gone and trust that He may be with us yet in the years that are coming. To Him be honor and glory and power!

HENRY J. PULVER, Vicar.

Eastertide, 1947.

## *All Souls' Church for the Deaf*

### OUR CLERGY

|        |  |           |
|--------|--|-----------|
| 14     | Rev. Henry Winter Syle.....                    | 1876-1890 |
| 4      | Rev. Jacob Mitzel Koehler.....                 | 1890-1904 |
| 1      | Rev. James Henry Cloud (Assistant).....        | 1891      |
| 0      | Rev. Franklin Charles Smielau (Assistant)..... | 1900      |
| 19     | Rev. Charles Orvis Dantzer .....               | 1904-1923 |
| 0      | Rev. George Henry Hefflon (Assistant).....     | 1909      |
| (15) 9 | Rev. Warren Milton Smaltz.....                 | 1923-1932 |
| 15     | Rev. Henry Jeremiah Pulver.....                | 1932-1947 |
| -      | Rev. Otto B. Berg - - - - -                    | 1948 -    |

### OUR SONS

#### Who Have Gone Forth from All Souls' to Preach to the Deaf the Everlasting Gospel

- Rev. J. M. Koehler, M.A., 1886—Missionary in Central Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, Vicar All Souls'; Trans-Mississippi. Retired 1917. Died 1932.
- Rev. J. H. Cloud, D.D., 1890—Assistant, All Souls'; Minister at St. Thomas' Mission, St. Louis. Died 1926.
- Rev. Oliver J. Whildin, M.A., 1899—Missionary Maryland, Washington, southern Dioceses. Retired 1932. Died 1943.
- Rev. Franklin C. Smielau, M.A., 1900—Assistant All Souls'; Missionary Central and Western Pennsylvania; Ohio, Indiana and Michigan. Died 1940.
- Rev. George Henry Hefflon, M.A., 1910—Assistant All Souls'; Missionary in New England. Died 1926.
- Rev. Henry J. Pulver, M.A., BD., 1921—Missionary Washington, Virginia and West Virginia, Central and Western Pennsylvania. Present Vicar of All Souls'. *Died in 1947.*
- Rev. Warren Milton Smaltz, M.A., S.T.B., 1923—Vicar of All Souls' to 1932; Missionary in Central and Western Pennsylvania. *Died in*
- Rev. Robert Capers Fletcher, B.A., 1929—Missionary in Province of Sewanee. *RETIRED in 1971.*
- Otto B. Berg, B.A., Th.B., 1943—Missionary in Md., D. C. and Virginia. *Vicar of All Souls-1948-*

BRADDOCK, \_\_\_\_\_ 15 \_\_\_\_\_ VICAR-1951-1968

MERCKLING \_\_\_\_\_ VICAR-1968-1969

PICKERING \_\_\_\_\_ VICAR-1969-2002

STEPHENS \_\_\_\_\_ VICAR 2002-2006

*Nov. 1,  
1932 -  
Died in 1947.  
June 28,*

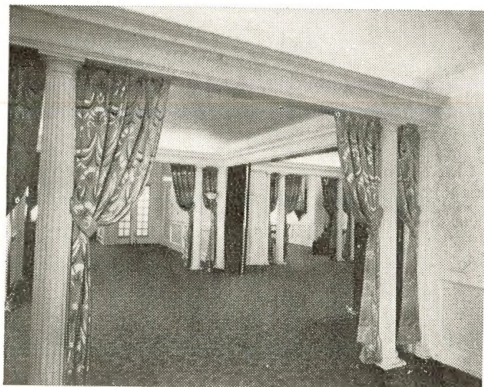


## Notes



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